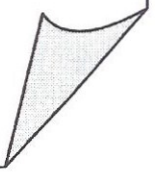


INTRODUCTION

From Me to You

*Intergenerational Connections
Through Storytelling*



From Me To You:
Intergenerational Connections Through Storytelling

The past one hundred years have been witness to extraordinary changes that have affected all aspects of life. The inventions that have shaped society were inconceivable to the people who lived at the turn of the century. Although history books provide well-documented details about the incredible changes that have taken place over time, it is important to recognize that many of today's older adults can offer a first hand account of the events, circumstances, heartaches, successes, failures, advances and alterations that have occurred across time. Valued leisure activities of the past have given way to technological inventions such as the television, computer and mechanized, fast-paced games. Storytelling, for example, was a highly valued leisure activity that provided ample opportunity for elders to share their wisdom and experiences and entertain their families. Storytelling, which is gaining in popularity in contemporary society, can focus on the memories of those who have survived the changes of the twentieth century and leave a legacy for future generations to cherish. It is the connections that result from the exchanges between generations that are as important as the stories told – and this is the intent behind collecting stories for this book.

The field of aging promotes both intergenerational connections and life-long learning. With this objective in mind we asked a group of seniors (SHARE: Seniors Helping Advance Research Excellence) to write a story or letter to a grandchild or someone they thought of as a grandchild. We then wanted to hear from young people and decided to collect stories from elementary school children and university students. We asked them to write something, a poem, a letter or a story, to a grandparent or an older person who was

special to them. These stories were so compelling that we began to envision a publication.

This book taps the valuable “living history books” we have circulating in our communities and provides many examples of the connectedness of the generations. These stories offer captivating examples of the connections that are being made between the young and the old and the many experiences and memories that are cherished by their authors.

As you read the pages that follow, a common message about values will be woven throughout many of the seniors’ recollections. When you read between the lines, you begin to discover that the fundamental guiding principles of life have not changed as dramatically over time as the means and methods of fulfilling life’s goals, dreams and objectives. The children of today essentially encounter a set of opportunities and barriers in life, just as their elders did when they were young. When you listen to the stories told by older adults, you hear about the lessons learned, the dreams, the heartaches, the hardships and the insights that came only with time. As you read the pages that follow you will identify many different themes, including advice, history, life stories, personal growth and family relationships.

An interesting point that is brought out in many of these stories is that older adults have been permitted to make their own decisions and shape their own experiences over the years, and these experiences have influenced later decisions, and in the end, come to be valued over time. Many older adults clearly state that their young loved ones must be allowed to experience life and learn their own lessons, while those who have travelled the “well-experienced” road recognize the importance of remaining supportive and offering guidance only when asked.

This publication has already stimulated a number of endearing exchanges across generations and we hope that these touching accounts of life’s hopes, dreams, relationships and “lessons learned”

will inspire others to seek out the stories contained in the memories of their older and younger relatives and friends. The rewards are potentially numerous and the enjoyment endless.

It is especially timely that this publication appear in 1999, the International Year of Older Persons, with the theme "A Society for All Ages." We hope that you will read these stories, share them with others and then begin your own intergenerational storytelling adventures.

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